

3 Ways to Identify and Help the Meeting Addicts on Your Staff

Have you ever had one of those moments when the only reason you leave one meeting is because you are about to be late to another? Entire days have been wasted due to unnecessary meetings. When you add it all up, we have probably lost entire years of our lives to meetings!

I think the source of our misery can be traced back to a group of people called “Meeting Addicts” or MAs. My name is Sara, and I used to be a Meeting Addict. My story may be able to help you identify the MAs on your team and plan to help.

Here are three main reasons we schedule with reckless abandon:

1) Community

Back when I was still over-scheduling meetings, I was single. One of the things I loved about meetings was the community I experienced. It was fun to be in the same room with everyone and interact for an hour or two. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but I did become aware of a similar trend from some of my married coworkers who were also MAs.

They seemed to be seeking community at work that they really should have been seeking at home. A staff member would be in meetings all day, and then at the end of the “work” day, they would begin all of the actual work that needed to get done. They would either stay at church until late in the evening or they would take their work home with them.

These Meeting Addicts frequently:

- Say yes to every meeting they are invited to and create meetings when there is no need.
- Keep the conversation going and prolong the meeting longer than necessary.
- May be avoiding something at home.
- Suggest lunch be brought in to continue meeting, or as the meeting is ending, they round up everyone for a two-hour lunch off-site.

As their leader you can help by:

- Clearly creating and defining relational time at work. Decide what timing works best for your team (monthly, quarterly, etc.) and schedule meals or down-time together. This does not have to break your budget.
- Addressing the possible issues at home. If a staff member is avoiding being home, it is important to find out why. Community time at work is good, great even. But it should not replace quality time with our spouse, family, and friends outside of work.
- Defining healthy boundaries. There will always be seasons when this is harder to walk out, but that should be the exception, not the rule if you want a healthy team.

2) Pride

The second reason that we over-schedule is pride. Somewhere along the way, meetings can become the “It” place to be. Personally, the outcast high school student in me felt a sense of belonging and acceptance when I was invited to certain meetings. I would do all I could to “make the cut” and then try and make myself as invaluable as possible in meetings I really had no business attending in the first place.

These MAs:

- Wear of badge of honor when it comes to being included in meetings.
- Have an air of self-importance.
- Have a need to be seen and known by everyone.
- Have a need to have a hand in everything.
- May brag about staying late “to get all my work done because I was in meetings all day.”

This might be the hardest group to reach. For me, it took a spiritual awakening of understanding my value and importance come from my identity in Christ and nowhere else.

The two best things you can do for this group are:

- Regularly cast vision for your staff (and hopefully your whole church) about their identity in Christ. Remind them where their value comes from.
- Remove them from some meetings they are going to unnecessarily. This will be an example of tough love but could be a great catalyst for discovering their true worth and value in Christ.

3) Confusion and/or Laziness

This final group of Meeting Addicts is a cluster of a few similar little groups. They love to be in ALL the meetings!

They are:

- People who don’t actually know what they need to be doing.
- People who know what to do and are just using meetings to avoid working. They will later tell you that they just don’t have enough time to get all the work done.

People who know what they are supposed to be doing and simply don’t have enough work to fill the day.

Help these groups by:

- Clarifying vision.
- Refining or redefining roles and job responsibilities. You may find you can combine some roles; you need to let some people go or drop them down to part-time status, or you need to give some staff members more responsibilities.